



Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of State Parks

Campground Host Handbook

Welcome to Missouri's Division of State Parks! Whether this is your first time hosting or you are an "old hand," we want you to know how much we appreciate your willingness to assist us and our campers. You provide an invaluable service to the people of Missouri and your hard work has helped make us one of the premier park systems in the United States.

This handbook will serve as your guide during your stay with us and should provide answers to most questions you might have. If there are any ways we can make your stay with us more productive, or you have any suggestions about the hosting program or this handbook, please pass them along to your facility manager.

Have a great camping season!

Douglas K. Eiken, Director
Division of State Parks

Mission of the Missouri State Park System

To preserve and interpret Missouri's finest natural landscapes; to preserve and interpret Missouri's finest cultural landmarks; and to provide healthy and enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities for all Missourians and visitors to Missouri.

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I. The Campground Host Program

The Campground Host Program is a volunteer program in which a host or host couple serves approximately forty hours per week in return for the use of a campsite. A host works under the supervision of a Natural Resource Manager or a Park/Site Specialist, or under his or her assigned representative. In this capacity, the host is subject to many of the same work rules and requirements as other personnel at the facility. Some of these rules are discussed under “The Role of the Campground Host.”

The Host Program is in effect in most of the forty state parks and historic sites that have campgrounds. Dates available for hosting generally run from April through October, though this can vary from facility to facility and may be somewhat weather dependent. Hosts are encouraged to serve a minimum of one month in a given facility, while the maximum service allowed in any one facility during a year is six months.

There are circumstances where a host can serve a facility for less than one month. However, this has become fairly uncommon as it can take a fair amount of staff time to train and orient a campground host, and by the time they are comfortable in their duties, it's time to move on.

We have couples that serve as hosts and we have individuals also. There is no requirement or expectation on our part either way. Often a hosting couple will split duties between them, though just as often one partner will do all or most of the work while the other enjoys the facility. While the job of hosting is not very strenuous by nature, you should be aware that it can often require extended hours and some walking over uneven terrain and long distances.

Many of our hosts serve at more than one facility over the course of a year. This win-win situation gives them a chance to enjoy the great variety in our park system, and it gives the facilities experienced hosts that carry their enthusiasm longer through the season.

II. The VIP Program

While one of the most visible means of volunteering in state parks and sites, the Campground Host Program is only one portion of our volunteer program. The Volunteers in Parks (VIP) Program provides invaluable assistance to the Division of State Parks on a wide variety of tasks and projects around the state.

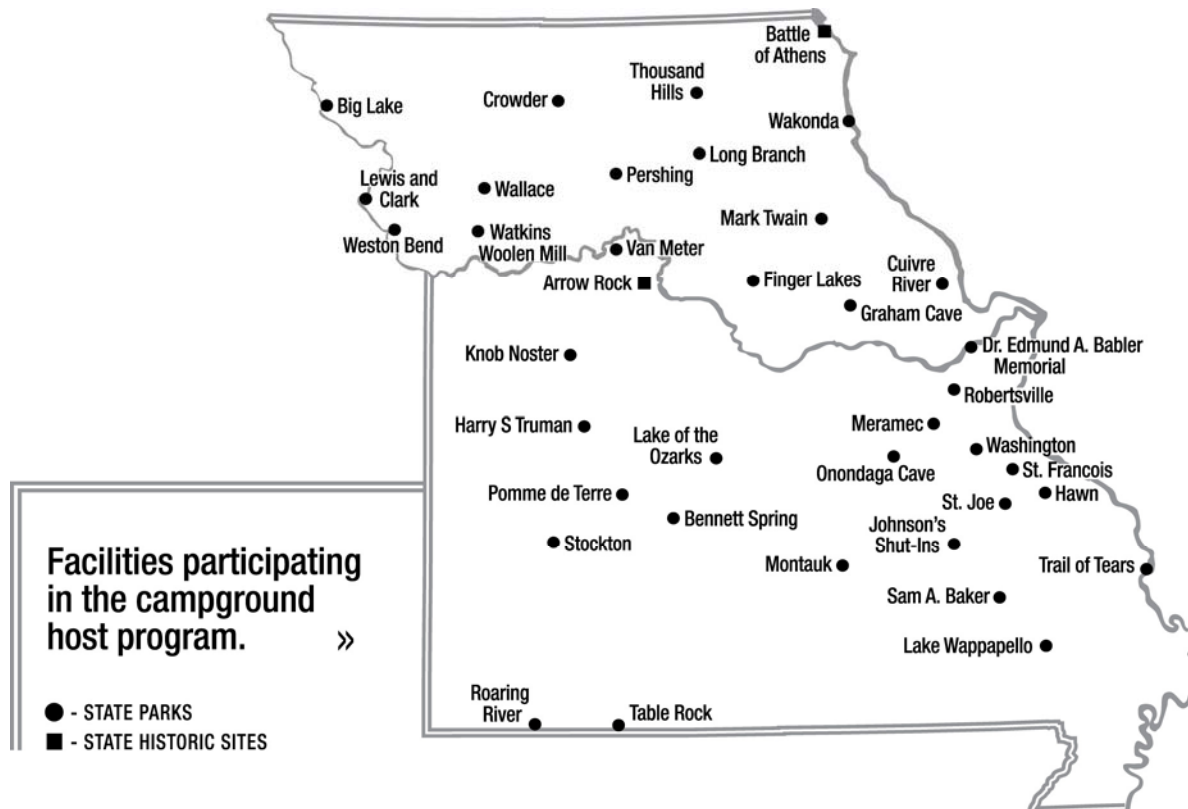
Volunteers assist people in visitor centers and contact stations. They help catalog historic items and documents and they serve as natural history interpreters and tour guides. Some VIPs perform maintenance or light construction tasks, or help with constructing or renovating trails. There is almost no limit to the types of work that volunteers can perform. The main requirement is a willingness to serve.

III. Facilities Participating in the Host Program

Arrow Rock State Historic Site
Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park
Sam A. Baker State Park
Battle of Athens State Historic Site
Bennett Spring State Park
Big Lake State Park
Crowder State Park
Cuivre River State Park
Finger Lakes State Park
Graham Cave State Park
Hawn State Park
Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park *
Knob Noster State Park
Lake of the Ozarks State Park
Lake Wappapello State Park
Lewis and Clark State Park
Long Branch State Park
Meramec State Park
Montauk State Park

Onondaga Cave State Park
Pershing State Park
Pomme de Terre State Park
Roaring River State Park
Robertsville State Park
St. Francois State Park
St. Joe State Park
Stockton State Park
Table Rock State Park
Thousand Hills State Park
Trail of Tears State Park
Harry S Truman State Park
Mark Twain State Park
Van Meter State Park
Wakonda State Park
Wallace State Park
Washington State Park
Watkins Woolen Mill State Park and Historic Site
Weston Bend State Park

(* No host opportunities in 2008 due to construction.)



IV. The Role of the Campground Host

As an 'Employee' of the State of Missouri

While the Division of State Parks appreciates the fact that you are volunteering your precious time to us, it is also extremely important that we realize how the rest of the world views the relationship we have. When you are performing your duties as host, our visitors and campers perceive you to be a *state employee*. Because of this, you must abide by many or most of the same codes and rules as park and site employees. These include:

- The state's code of ethics prohibits employees from accepting gratuities or gifts of any kind.

What this means: You are not allowed to accept money or any type of gift (food or any items of value) during the performance of your duties. (This includes any gratuities offered by the park/site concessionaire.) On the flip side of this, it is likewise inappropriate for you to offer gifts or gratuities to other employees.

- State employees are prohibited from discriminating against or showing favoritism toward anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, or physical disability. State employees are prohibited from sexual harassment.

What this means: All of our visitors and coworkers are to be treated with respect and courtesy. These policies are based on federal and state laws and will be enforced.

- Consumption of alcohol and/or controlled substances while on duty is prohibited.

What this means: Except for prescription medications, you are not allowed to drink or take drugs while on duty as host. Please keep in mind that even when you are off duty, that you represent the state during your stay and the impression you give our visitors reflects on all of us.

- Employees shall maintain a neat appearance and maintain their workplace in a clean and orderly fashion.

What this means: Since you represent the State of Missouri to many of our visitors, it is very important that you are dressed and groomed appropriately. You will be issued a campground host ID and some facilities may provide you with uniform items that identify you as host. Whether or not you have a uniform, your clothing must be clean, appropriate to the season, and appropriate for greeting the public. IDs should be worn at all times when you are on duty.

Beyond personal appearance, your workplace also reflects on you as a state employee. For almost all hosts, the workplace is their RV or camper, along with the campsite they occupy. Please make sure your site is well groomed, is free of trash, etc. "Personal touches" such as plaques with your name, windchimes, etc., are allowed, but we prohibit placement of skirting or fencing around the camper or site during the summer months or on-season. Skirting is allowed only during cold-weather months and only with permission of the facility manager.

V. Risk Management

- State owned property cannot be used for any purpose other than official state business.

What this means: Some facilities may provide you with a vehicle, golf cart, tools, telephone hookup, or some other item(s) owned by the state that is used as part of your work. For example, you may use a state vehicle to collect fees or pull camping permits, but may not use it for personal reasons such as travel to town to get groceries. Likewise, you may not perform maintenance on your personal vehicle with state tools. The only partial exception is the telephone hookup (if provided). You may make local calls, however you must either pay for long-distance calls or charge them to a personal credit card.

Special rules related to state vehicles (includes state provided golf carts).

- *Use of tobacco products is prohibited in state vehicles.*
- *Transporting family members, dependents or friends is prohibited.*
- *Animals are not allowed in state vehicles unless they are transported in the conduct of state business or are required by a passenger's disability.*

(State of Missouri Administrative Policy SP-4)

- State-owned vehicles must comply with state regulations on licensing.

What this means: Your personal vehicle (truck, car, moped, golf cart, etc.) is obviously not owned by the state. However, because the roads within a park and campground are considered 'state highways,' all vehicles that use them must comply with state law. A golf cart, for example, must be a licensed vehicle to be operated for personal use, but if you use your own golf cart only for conducting state business it does not need to be licensed because some different laws apply to state vehicles. This might be a bit confusing so if you have questions, please talk them over with the facility manager or the Volunteer Coordinator.

It is important to keep in mind that your personal vehicle must not only comply with appropriate state laws, it must also be in good mechanical condition and you must be knowledgeable in its operation. All of you will no doubt think that we are stating the obvious here. Unfortunately, there are people who buy new 'toys' such as a moped or golf cart and not have the faintest idea of how to safely operate them. This not only places the owner/operator in a dangerous position, it can jeopardize the people around him, and it can place the State of Missouri in a very precarious position.

If you bring a personal vehicle such as a golf cart that is not licensed, you will only be able to operate it while conducting state business. In order for you to be protected from most liability concerns, we may provide you with a magnetic decal that identifies you and your vehicle as being part of the Department of Natural Resources. The decal may only be used while you are working and must be returned to the facility manager when you end your service. Any expense associated with use of personal vehicle(s) will be reimbursed at the parks discretion.

- All injuries to visitors and employees must be reported immediately.

What this means: To ensure the safety of our visitors and employees it is vital that we have a record any time someone is injured at one of our facilities. Generally, it will be sufficient to notify the Park Ranger or facility manager as soon as you become aware of someone being hurt. Get as much information as you can and if necessary refer the person to the nearest medical facility. Information on local medical facilities will be provided to you during orientation. Staff members should refrain from offering medical advice and seek assistance as quickly as possible.

- An employee injured on the job may be eligible to certain benefits.

What this means: If you are injured while performing your duties as a host, workmen's compensation laws should cover you. It is critical, however, that you notify the facility manager as quickly as possible in the event of such injury to make sure that the appropriate people are notified. Injuries that occur during your off duty hours will not be covered.

- Understand the task being assigned.

What this means: Most accidents occur due to improper training or failure to use appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE). No staff member should undertake an assignment or task that they have not been sufficiently trained to perform. Before undertaking an assignment or task, make sure that you understand the assignment or task. If the assignment/task involves the use of any type of equipment, request that a fulltime member of the park staff provide you with the proper training on the proper usage of the piece of equipment. In addition, you should receive the appropriate personal protection equipment for the piece of equipment being used. Examples of personal protection equipment are:

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Goggles/Eye Protection</i> | <i>Hard Hat</i> |
| <i>Gloves</i> | <i>Ear Plugs</i> |
| <i>Chainsaw Chaps</i> | <i>High Visibility Safety Vest</i> |

- Automobile Accidents

What this means: State vehicles should only be operated while conducting business for the state of Missouri. As a state agency, we self insure our vehicles against accidents with others. In the event of an automobile accident, it is important to remember that the Office of Administration-Risk Management Section and/or the Attorney Generals Office is responsible for determining fault and negotiation any claim settlement as a result of an accident. Staff members should refrain from discussing any issue of fault for an accident.

All staff members involved in an automobile accident are required to contact the nearest law enforcement agency or the Missouri State Highway Patrol for an accident report. Staff member(s) involved in an accident should not leave the scene of the accident until a report has been made with a law enforcement official. The accident should be reported to your immediate supervisor should be contacted as soon as possible.

There is one additional issue related to your role as a state employee that we need to cover and that is legal liability in the use of personal vehicles and equipment. Because of your rather unique working relationship with the state, some of the lines may seem to be blurred when it comes to separating personal activities from work activities. This seems to be most true in regard to using your personal property while conducting state business.

One place where making a distinction between personal use and state use is most critical is the liability issue. What happens, for example, if you are driving your personal vehicle or golf cart through the campground and accidentally hit another vehicle? The answer depends entirely on whether or not you are on duty and performing activities related to your job. If you are pulling expired permits or are out collecting fees in your personal vehicle, then you are functioning as an employee and the state will provide liability coverage for damage caused to the other individual's property. Any damage to your property will be covered by your personal insurance policy. On the other hand, if you just finished pulling permits and decide to go to town to get some groceries, then you are on your own time and the liability falls back on you and your insurance carrier.

A final word on the dos and don'ts of hosting – if you are aware of any other volunteer or employee violating any of the above-mentioned policies, please notify the facility manager as soon as possible.

As always, if you have questions or concerns about this, please talk them over with the facility manager or the Volunteer Coordinator.

VI. Potential Conflicts

As was stated earlier, you enjoy a rather unique relationship with the State of Missouri. Being a volunteer affords you many opportunities that other employees don't often get. Along with those opportunities, though, come some responsibilities.

Once you arrive in your assigned park or historic site, you become a member of a team. All the members of that team have their own roles to play and their own responsibilities. While all Americans still idolize the 'rugged individualist' portrayed in our literature and movies, the fact is that most worthwhile accomplishments are done through teamwork.

There will undoubtedly be times when you disagree with a specific rule or decision that effects your work as a host or facility operation. You are not only free to discuss your concerns with the facility manager; you are encouraged to do so. However, except for an instance that clearly violates the law or creates an unsafe condition, you are obligated to actively support and carry out stated rules and decisions. Only if and when such rules or decisions are changed, may you do otherwise.

Another potential conflict was alluded to earlier that has to do with unsafe or illegal actions. Though you are a member of the team and considered a state employee in many regards, you are never under any obligation to perform any activity that places you or another person in physical danger. Nor are you obliged to participate in or condone any activity that is illegal.

Should the unlikely happen and an employee or supervisor asks or orders you to do something you believe to be unsafe or illegal, you are to refuse to do so. Bring such an occurrence to the attention of the facility manager or Volunteer Coordinator immediately.

VII. General Duties and Responsibilities

It is a general rule of thumb that we expect a host (or a host couple's combined time) to work forty (40) hours per week. This can vary by season or by how busy the campground is. There will be days when you put in more than eight hours and days you put in less. It is not our intention to overwork you, so if you find you are putting in more than forty hours per week please let the facility manager know so your schedule or duties can be modified. If you feel you are not finding enough to do to come close to the forty hour standard, we can try to find some additional tasks. However, any additional work will either fall within the scope of the duties outlined below or must be approved by division management. In any case, your schedule and daily tasks will be coordinated with your facility manager. Monthly timesheets are required to document your service and will be provided to you at orientation.

The roles and functions fulfilled by campground hosts are nearly as varied as the parks and historic sites in which they serve. There are a number of common themes, however, that will give you an idea of what to expect, as well as what is expected of you.

Each facility manager will provide you of a specific list of duties upon your arrival. Those duties will be similar to what is listed here, though the specifics of how, when, and why may vary widely from facility to facility. The life of a campground host is seldom strenuous, however you should inform your facility manager of any physical limitations you might have that could affect your ability to perform any of these tasks. We will do what we can to accommodate your needs within the scope of the job and our financial abilities.

- *Visitor Assistance:* You will perform this important activity on a daily basis. This service may include handing out brochures, giving directions, helping visitors find an empty campsite, maintaining a current roster or log of campers, and providing other general information. This service also includes informing visitors of minor rule violations, such as having too many vehicles on a site, noise after quiet hours, etc.
- *Fee Collection:* You may be required to collect camping fees, pull expired camping permits, sell firewood, or collect other miscellaneous fees from campers and other visitors. The types of fees, how, when and where they are collected, and their disposition will be dictated by the needs and layout of the facility. Each facility manager, however, will provide you with a clear set of written guidelines and procedures on how the facility handles revenue. Included in that document will be a security plan dealing with how money is to be handled so you do not have large amounts of cash in your possession at any time.
- *Light Maintenance:* This could include such things as periodic litter pick-up, light cleaning in the shower house and/or replenishing toilet paper in restrooms. All serious maintenance needs should be referred to the facility's maintenance staff.
- *Monitor the Campground:* As with visitor assistance, this duty will be appropriate in all facilities. You will be in a position to see and hear many things that our other employees miss. When those things negatively affect our visitors or facility operations, you should pass along any information

you have to the facility manager, Park Ranger, or other staff member. This could include such things as people being noisy after quiet hours, a camper who refuses to pay their fees, a barking dog, or some other disruption.

- *Distribute Comment Cards: You may be asked to distribute Guest Comment Cards to campers during the normal course of your duties. These cards are provided at Missouri state park system facilities as a mechanism for visitors to share their opinions on our services if they so choose. It is important to recognize that you represent the park system in your hosting capacity. Comments made of your own personal opinion can easily be construed as division policy or opinion by a visitor. It can be easy to agree with a complaint or comment from a camper if it is something you personally agree with as well. Please do your best to stick with factual division rules or policies and allow the comment card process to serve as the camper's opportunity for bringing issues to the division's attention.*

Certain facilities may have other duties for you that don't fall neatly into one of these four categories. These duties will be carefully explained during your orientation. They will also be duties that have received prior approval from management staff.

A special note about monitoring the campground and providing visitor information. One can easily find him or herself in a position to go beyond what is required or expected when it comes to informing visitors about our rules. The Division of State Parks neither expects nor wants you to intentionally or inadvertently assume a role that could put you in jeopardy. We have Natural Resource Managers and Park/Historic Site Specialists, Park Rangers, and outside law enforcement agencies to deal with unruly persons or those that break the law. We do not want you placed in the position of trying to handle these people on your own. Our staff members are trained to do so and they have the authority to handle such incidents.

Your responsibility is to inform or remind visitors of the rules whenever it becomes necessary. You are **not responsible for enforcing** those rules.

Along those same lines, unless you have up-to-date training in first aid or CPR, in an emergency it is generally best to seek assistance as quickly as possible. The primary rule that physicians follow is 'do no harm.' This is a sound rule for us to follow as well. Leave medical emergencies in the hands of trained professionals. Your facility manager will provide you with emergency contact numbers during orientation.

VIII. Compensation

In return for the time and labor you provide to us, we give you free camping in parks and sites that are some of the finest examples of the natural and cultural resources Missouri has to offer. You also have the honor and privilege of meeting and greeting some of the most wonderful people in the world – our campers.

While you are volunteering your time and energy on our behalf, we want to try to ensure that you do not have to volunteer much more than that. Many hosts have incidental expenses associated with using a personal vehicle to perform state work or the cost of returning home occasionally while serving at a facility. We are unable to cover all such costs, but some parks/sites do offer partial reimbursement.

Depending on the park, that park/site may reimburse you for your mileage between the park and your home when arriving and departing the park (or between the park and the Missouri border if you are from out of state) at the current mileage rate, up to \$100.00 for each calendar month or portion thereof that you work per host couple. This mileage may be verified using an online service such as www.mapquest.com. Reimbursements may be available in addition to the initial \$100 for special circumstances such as special events or natural disaster assistance in other facilities with approval by the district office. You also have the option of declining reimbursement if you prefer.

If the state park or historic site where you host chooses to provide reimbursements, then the facility manager will provide you with the proper documents for claiming reimbursement and forward them on your behalf. In addition, reimbursements may be available for Missouri State Park campground host training(s) that include but are not limited to lodging, mileage, food, camping and reservation fees. (The reimbursement amount for host training will be identified prior to registration for that training.)

Other incentives:

- Firewood – Many parks provide complementary firewood for their campground hosts. This firewood should always be taken from the administrative or office firewood supply, not from the resale wood lot.
- Laundry – Free laundry is available at facilities with park/site run laundry facilities. See facility manager for details.
- Camping Coupons – One free camping coupon per host couple will be issued for each full month of service at a facility.

IX. Your Comments and Opinions

Your comments and opinions; positive or negative, regarding your experience as campground hosts are welcomed. You may contact the park manager, the volunteer coordinator, or our division director by phone, e-mail or in writing using the contact information below. We value your opinion. We look forward to hearing from you.

X. Contact Us

Volunteer Coordinator: Connie Schmidt

Mail: Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of State Parks - Volunteer Coordinator
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102

E-mail: dspvolunteercoordinator@dnr.mo.gov

Telephone: 1-800-334-6946 / (573) 751-7733

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